DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY JL DATE 8/15/81
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED
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EXCISE
32

March 28, 1977

Dear Mr. Buchanan:

This is in reply to your request of February 18 with which you forwarded a letter from [redacted] asking for information on the Black Hebrew Israelites. B-6

Since November 1969 groups of black Americans have been going to Israel and taking up residence illegally in that country. These "Black Hebrews" claim to be descendents of a Mossic sect that left the Holy Land for Africa thousands of years ago.

With few exceptions these American Blacks are not recognized by Israel's Rabbinical authorities as Jews according to religious law. They have entered Israel for the most part as tourists. The Israeli Ministry of Interior is studying the problem posed by the sect, but has not yet concluded how it should be handled. As of early December 1976 about 60 members of the sect had renounced their American citizenship and are thus stateless. It is estimated that about 1,000 members of this sect are currently residing in Israel.

For further information on the legal and religious status of the Black Hebrew Israelites, [redacted] may want to contact the Israeli Embassy in Washington or the Israeli Ministry of Interior in Jerusalem. B-6

Sincerely,

Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

Enclosure:
Correspondence returned.

The Honorable
John H. Buchanan, Jr.,
House of Representatives

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